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COLOMBIA - THE STRATEGIC CHALLENGE

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COLOMBIA: THE STRATEGIC CHALLENGE

Americans tend to view Colombia's problems as a single issue: drugs. While the country is the source of approximately 80 percent of the cocaine used in the United States and Europe, as well as a significant proportion of the heroin consumed in the eastern U.S.,¹ the drug trade is a symptom of a deeper malaise. It results from the inability of the Colombian government to exert its authority in large areas of the country - a weakness that is exploited by armed insurgent groups such as the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the National Liberation Army (ELN), and the United Self-Defense Groups of Colombia (AUC). The violent actions of these and other groups have produced gruesome human rights violations, rampant crime and lawlessness, and displaced thousands of people.² The political stability of the country has been called into question.

Any U.S. strategy that seeks to shore up the Colombian government and make progress in the drug war must take into account these realities. The drug trade is linked both to the weakness of the Government of Colombia and to the insatiable demand for drugs by the U.S. market. The latter is an issue for domestic education and health authorities; the former lies within the realm of the national security strategist. The strategist must recognize, however, that as long as the demand for narcotics exists, a complete victory cannot be won in the drug war. The demand side of the problem must be attacked as vigorously as the supply side.

With this important caveat, I believe that the United States can make an important, positive difference in Colombia by strengthening that country's public institutions in both the military and civil sectors, bolstering government authority throughout the country, and promote rural development. This strategy recognizes that the problem is a long-term one that cannot be solved by a military "quick-fix." It comprehends historical realities and offers both carrots and sticks to

break the power of the armed groups currently bedeviling the country. Finally, it acknowledges that the problem is ultimately one that Colombians will have to solve on their own, and provides them with the resources and support to do so.

Why Colombia Matters...

Colombia is important to the United States for more than just counternarcotics reasons. The country has one of the longest traditions of democratic rule in Latin America and serves as an example to other countries in this often politically turbulent region. Instability in Colombia could also threaten its neighbors: oil-rich Venezuela, currently grappling with its own political crisis under the idiosyncratic rule of Hugo Chavez;³ poverty-stricken and chronically unstable Ecuador, where tensions between Hispanic and indigenous citizens continue to simmer; and Panama, site of the still-strategically-important canal as well as world-class corruption. Colombia also has sizeable oil and mineral reserves of its own - an increasingly important factor given the rising tensions in the Middle East.⁴ Finally, the widespread human rights violations in Colombia have attracted the attention of U.S. human rights groups as well as the large and growing Colombian-American community, both of which seek to ameliorate the dreadful situation.

...And Why it Doesn't:

Strategists must keep in mind that Colombia does not present the same kind of threat to U.S. national security that Iraq and North Korea do. FARC leader Manuel Marulanda and his AUC counterpart, Carlos Castano, do not menace the United States with weapons of mass destruction the way Saddam Hussein does. While both of these groups and the ELN have carried out terrorist attacks within Colombia, including the murder of ten U.S. citizens, they do not appear to have the motive or capability to launch Al Qaeda-style terrorist assaults in the United

States.⁵ Indeed, these groups have a symbiotic relationship with the United States, which represents the most lucrative market for their illicit drugs and the biggest source of funds for their operations. The narcotics trade itself, while very costly in both lives and dollars, does not threaten the United States with imminent national destruction. Drugs are "slow poison" and insidious in their effects, unlike the "fast poison" of chemical and biological agents, which could kill millions if unleashed by an attacker. Finally, while instability in Colombia is detrimental to its neighbors, even a worst-case scenario does not envision the ignition of a major war of the kind that could explode at various unstable Middle Eastern and Asian flashpoints. The Bush Administration's new national security strategy implicitly recognizes this when it discusses Colombia as a "regional" issue.⁶

Colombia's long-term problems should be fixed, but they do not require the kind of urgent, massive military response that the threats of weapons of mass destruction and international terrorism do. Indeed, such a strategy is likely to fail in the Colombian context.

Background:

Colombia has a tragic history of violence and weak central authority. A ten-year wave of bloodshed (1948-58), primarily in rural areas, known as "La Violencia" cost more than 200,000 lives. Poverty, lack of development, and grossly unequal land distribution provided fertile ground for leftist insurgent groups such as the FARC, the National Liberation Army (ELN), the Popular Liberation Army (EPL) and others.⁷ With support from the USSR and Cuba, these groups waged guerrilla war mainly in the countryside. While unable to bring down the Colombian government, these organizations, especially the FARC, did achieve dominance in many rural areas. At the same time, they spawned a violent reaction not only from the Colombian Armed Forces, but also from various self-defense groups and private militias formed

by wealthy landowners and businessmen. These latter groups also targeted members of the legal Communist party, other leftist parties, trade union organizers, and other alleged "agitators," murdering thousands.⁸ The ELN also carried out a form of economic warfare (or ecological terrorism, depending on your point of view) by regularly blowing up remote sections of Colombia's largest oil export pipeline.⁹

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the economic crisis in Cuba removed most of the ideological and financial underpinnings of the leftist insurgencies. While some groups withered and a few made peace with the government, the FARC and the ELN found other sources of income. Robbery, extortion, and the ransoming of kidnapped victims all contributed, but the most lucrative source of funds is the drug trade - a trade previously dominated by large, urban-based criminal cartels. Given this financing, the continuing lack of development and a stable government presence in many rural areas, the FARC maintained its personnel strength, and is now estimated to number approximately 18,000 fighters dispersed in regional "fronts". The smaller ELN has between 3500 and 5000 guerrillas.¹⁰

For its part, the 15,000-strong AUC, an umbrella group of paramilitary self-defense forces, has also engaged in criminal activity and drug trafficking. In fact, internal tensions over the narco activities of some members recently produced a split in the national organization, with AUC leader Castano withdrawing his forces in protest.¹¹ Other Colombian criminal organizations unaffiliated with either the FARC or the AUC continue to move vast quantities of drugs to the United States, sometimes paying protection money or "taxes" to one group or the other.¹²

U.S. strategists traditionally looked at the Colombian "problem" as a security issue when the leftist insurgencies first began in the 1950s, and then as a counternarcotics matter when the

drug trade flared into prominence. As early as 1958 a U.S. team visited Colombia and recommended a comprehensive development package that would have encompassed significant land reform and possibly short-circuited the guerrilla uprisings. Colombian elites opposed the plan and the U.S. did not press them. Only the security-related recommendations were adopted.¹³

In the late 1980s when the specter of drugs captured the national consciousness, the U.S. followed an "Andean Strategy" to control the spread of narcotics. This strategy targeted both the raw materials (coca leaves, then produced mainly in Bolivia and Peru), as well as the laboratories and infrastructure of the criminal syndicates that refined and trafficked the drugs (located in Colombia). This program was successful in reducing coca production in Bolivia and Peru, and helped the Colombians to destroy the infamous Medellin and Cali drug cartels.¹⁴ There was only one major problem - the flow of drugs into the United States continued unimpeded. Coca production moved to Colombia, and a new crop, opium poppies, flourished. The Medellin and Cali cartels were supplanted by dozens of smaller criminal organizations. And finally, guerrilla groups like the FARC, which were explicitly excluded from the Andean Strategy, moved into the drug trade.¹⁵ The expenditure of billions of dollars and thousands of lives did not change the fundamental situation in Colombia - the government remained weak, rural areas remained lawless, and the insurgencies continued. Strategies based solely on security and/or counternarcotics efforts were failures.

Policy Options:

An analysis of the situation in Colombia brings forth three possible options to end the insurgencies, reinforce the authority of the Colombian state, and reduce the drug trade (as noted earlier, one cannot expect drug trafficking to be eliminated while the demand for drugs continues

in the United States). These options are: accommodation, military confrontation, and law enforcement/development (LED). As explained earlier, I believe the latter is the best strategy for dealing with the roots of the problem (underdevelopment and weak government) rather than its symptoms (drug trafficking and insurgency). Since an LED strategy will be expensive, difficult, and time consuming, it is important to review the other options which might appear to offer quicker or cheaper solutions.

I. Accommodation

This option is based on the Colombian Government offering a sufficient number of concessions or benefits to the insurgent groups to induce them to change their behavior, renounce violence, and rejoin civil society. Under this plan, the groups would either lay down their arms wholesale by agreement, or a sufficient number of their members would be induced to desert so as to render the organization effectively defunct. This option has special appeal to human rights groups and others concerned with minimizing violence, since it lacks a coercive element and presumably would be implemented at the conference table, not on the battlefield.

While it is true that some of the smaller Colombian guerrilla groups, notably the urban-based M-19 movement, have reached peaceful agreements with the government and successfully demobilized, an accommodation plan is unlikely to work with the FARC, ELN, or AUC. None of the latter groups are likely to voluntarily suspend their lucrative criminal activities in exchange for the right to compete in the Colombian political system.¹⁶ None of the groups currently espouse a credible ideology that would resonate with a significant percentage of the electorate, and none could expect to win more power and influence at the ballot box than they have currently achieved through force of arms. No package of resettlement assistance that the Colombian government could conceivably offer could match the money earned through illicit

activities. Nor could the Colombian government turn a blind eye to these activities in exchange for peace; such an "ostrich" strategy would be immediately obvious and would destroy the last shreds of credibility possessed by the government, not to mention its relations with the United States.

The most damning argument against an accommodation strategy, however, is that it has already been tried, and has failed. In 1998 President Andres Pastrana granted the FARC de facto control over a large swath of territory in southern Colombia known as the "despeje." This good faith gesture was meant to spur serious negotiations with the FARC, and was to be accompanied by a government campaign against the excesses of the paramilitary groups and a massive, \$7.5 billion development plan - the original "Plan Colombia." In reality, the FARC used the despeje to rest and rearm, and never conducted serious peace talks. The government, for its part, never reined-in the paramilitary forces, and failed to obtain sufficient funds from the international community to implement the development aspects of Plan Colombia.¹⁷ Pastrana did receive a commitment for \$1.3 billion from the United States for a limited version of the plan, focused primarily on security and counternarcotics operations. With the FARC continuing its armed attacks, Pastrana revoked the demilitarized zone and ordered the armed forces to retake the despeje in early 2002.¹⁸ The most serious attempt at an accommodation strategy in recent times was an abject failure.

II. Military Confrontation

If peaceful accommodation will not work, a strategy of military confrontation becomes more attractive. After all, the insurgent groups are a threat because of their violent activities and use of force, not because of their ideology. They must therefore be met with counterforce, which will either compel them to the peace table, or, if they are recalcitrant, will destroy them outright.

Colombia's new, hardline president, Alvaro Uribe, and the new version of the U.S.-backed Plan Colombia appear to accept this reasoning, at least in part.¹⁹ Uribe, who has survived several attempts on his life, advocated a tough, confrontational policy against insurgent groups during his successful presidential campaign, and has welcomed increased U.S. security assistance. Washington has responded with a major program of military aid, including sophisticated helicopters, intelligence support, and extensive security training.²⁰ The latter includes an initiative to train three new Colombian army counternarcotics battalions using U.S. Special Forces troops, as well as commando forces.²¹

The assistance program is publicly justified on counternarcotics grounds in order to comply with Congressional restrictions on aid to Colombia. The rationale is simple. It is not possible to eradicate the drug production controlled by armed insurgent groups without first defeating those groups militarily. In order to get to the drugs, one must first destroy the "thugs" protecting them.

At first glance, the military option seems logical. The first Andean Strategy did not take insurgent groups into account and failed to reduce drug trafficking. The FARC, ELN and AUC have expanded their criminal activities and increased the threat to the Colombian state. Why not deploy an expanded, reinvigorated Colombian Army, together with U.S. advisers, to smash them once and for all?

On further reflection, however, the military option appears fraught with problems, not the least of which is the example of history. The Colombian Army has been fighting the FARC and other leftist insurgents for over 40 years without decisively defeating them. Both sides have suffered in this long and bloody struggle, but the insurgents remain in the field.

There is no doubt that the Colombian army needs help to upgrade its capabilities, but it has deeper problems that cannot be overcome solely by new equipment and Special Forces training.

More than half of the 145,000-strong military establishment is composed of conscripts, the vast majority of whom are lower class and poorly educated, with little stake in the system they are being required to defend.²² Colombia's middle and upper classes, which have the most to lose, have not been called to the colors. The army has also been susceptible to corruption, either directly or through alliances with paramilitary groups. These same relationships have also contributed to the dismal human rights record of the Colombian military.²³

As Carl Von Clausewitz points out, a successful military strategist needs to identify the kind of war he is fighting and the opponent's "centers of gravity." What does this mean in the Colombian context? As noted earlier, the U.S. homeland is a drug market, rather than a target, for Colombian insurgent groups, who apparently do not have credible plans to create or obtain weapons of mass destruction. The struggle against the insurgents is thus a limited war, with limited objectives.

The insurgents' centers of gravity are much harder to define. Both the FARC and the AUC are composed of numerous self-contained groups spread throughout a vast area of rugged and inhospitable terrain. Neither organization seeks to concentrate its forces into a compact area where the army could offer a decisive battle. There can therefore be no Colombian version of the successful coalition attack that drove Iraqi forces from Kuwait in 1992; an "Operation Tropical Storm" is not feasible. Even if a successful strike eliminated the national leadership of the FARC, ELN, or AUC, the leaders of the individual fronts or units could easily continue their operations in their local areas.

If there is no military center of gravity, what about a financial one? The insurgent groups benefit from the drug trade and need to launder and repatriate their illicit profits. Could drugs be blocked from leaving the country, and money and arms from entering? Once again, the

decentralized nature of the armed groups, combined with the notoriously porous borders of a country three times the size of California argue against success. Smuggling of one kind or another has always flourished in Colombia, and no military increase now planned or even contemplated could provide sufficient forces to seal the country's frontiers.²⁴

The above reasoning leads to one conclusion - the insurgents will have to be fought front by front, unit by unit, and destroyed individually in their remote lairs. Visions of another tropical guerrilla war - the tragedy in Vietnam - immediately come to mind, and well they should. This kind of military attrition strategy, if unaccompanied by major development aid, will surely fail. There is no doubt that the modernized Colombian army battalions will win battles, but they cannot win the war. Hard-pressed insurgent units will do what they have done before - avoid battle and fade away into remote areas, only to emerge again after the military has returned to its bases. The army is not large enough or strong enough to effectively garrison the vast rural zones where governmental power is weak or non-existent. Those garrisons that are established will of necessity not be drawn from the elite U.S.-trained forces, but rather from run of the mill conscripts whose fighting quality is limited and potential for corruption great.

In Afghanistan the U.S. military has discovered just how difficult it is to tell friend from foe in a large and poverty-stricken region. Military units in Colombia would face the same problem, and if history is any guide, large numbers of innocent people would suffer harsh consequences. The negative human rights fallout of a protracted military campaign might even undermine the political support for U.S. aid to Colombia. Finally, the Colombian government appears to lack the will to launch an even-handed military campaign against the AUC paramilitaries as well as the FARC and the ELN. Military sympathy for (and in some cases outright complicity in) paramilitary operations has so far frustrated efforts to rein in the power of

the AUC.²⁵ While the government denies any bias, its recent military strike against insurgents in a poverty-stricken suburb of Medellin (Operation Orion) has concentrated on a FARC-dominated neighborhood, while ignoring a much larger paramilitary presence in surrounding areas.²⁶ The AUC therefore continues to grow in wealth and power, and threatens the Colombian state from the right. These factors all argue against the success of a strategy based solely on military confrontation. The above analysis of the strategic and military settings, as well as the capabilities and vulnerabilities of the combatants, indicates that we cannot achieve our political objective of stabilizing Colombia solely by military means.

III. The Way Forward: Law Enforcement/Development (LED)

The only strategy that offers the potential to improve the current situation in Colombia is one that combines both a vigorous law enforcement effort with an extensive aid program to attack the roots of insurgency in rural areas - underdevelopment and the absence of government authority. President Pastrana offered the guerillas a carrot, the despeje zone, in an effort to obtain peace. Now, President Uribe seems set to wield the stick of military confrontation to compel a peace by force of arms. While both strategies promise short-term benefits, neither is sustainable over the long run. The LED strategy, encompassing both carrots and sticks and focusing on the fundamental problem rather than just its symptoms, offers a greater chance for success.

The centerpiece of an effective LED strategy must be a major, comprehensive aid program to rebuild Colombia's civil institutions, extend their authority into rural areas, and improve the lives of rural residents. Mao Tse Tung wrote that "power grows from the barrel of a gun,"²⁷ but it also grows from the rulings of a respected and uncorrupt judiciary, from the work of agricultural extension agents, from local health clinics and schools, and, quite literally, from

improved rural electrical grids. In a country where an estimated 95 percent of crimes are never prosecuted and tax collection is weak,²⁸ government institutions will need extensive reform and reinforcement. These measures will carry a hefty price tag - one ballpark figure is the original \$7.5 billion estimate for President Pastrana's version of Plan Colombia - but the cost of not acting is also high. Colombia is already the third largest recipient of U.S. aid (after Israel and Egypt)²⁹ but the flow of northbound drugs has not slackened, nor has the power of the insurgents waned.

Development aid is not a "quick fix" solution, and the kind of rural development programs envisioned in the LED strategy will take a considerable time to come to fruition. Even so, the positive trend generated by the government's commitment to this strategy should become evident early on and help it seize the public relations "high ground."

The Mafia with Mortars

The other indispensable part of the LED strategy is a comprehensive law enforcement effort to break the armed power of the insurgent organizations. I use the term "law enforcement" here deliberately, to draw a contrast with the military-only option, even though military units will be heavily involved in this effort. This strategy views the insurgents as well-armed criminals rather than an opposing military force, and uses all the techniques available to law enforcement to defeat them.

Colombia's quasi-military National Police (CNP) has traditionally been viewed as less corrupt than the army, and the U.S. has furnished extensive support to the CNP.³⁰ This aid needs to be increased, especially in the areas of intelligence gathering and investigative techniques. The CNP needs to carry out a vigorous effort to identify insurgent cells, supporters, safehouses, and drug labs in both urban and rural areas. At the same time, a major campaign to root out

corruption in the government needs to be undertaken, as well as a comprehensive investigation of the Colombian financial system to eliminate money laundering and choke off the flow of funds to insurgent organizations. Once again, in order to be politically credible, the government must pursue both leftist and rightist groups with equal determination.

There is no denying, however, that the military will have to play an important role in this effort. The FARC, ELN, and the AUC may be criminal enterprises, but they are "mafias with mortars" and the military will be needed to deal with the size and firepower of the larger units of these organizations. This is the task for the U.S. -trained counternarcotics and commando battalions. Unlike in the military option, however, these forces will supplement, not supplant, the police, and will constitute one component of a much broader strategy.

Ways and Means:

A viable Law Enforcement/Development strategy will require the use of a variety of tools. First and foremost, the United States must engage Colombia in an effective dialogue to ensure that the Colombians themselves "buy in" to the LED strategy. The mere acquiescence of the government is not enough. Colombia will need to make some hard choices in order to ensure success. The currently dismal level of tax collection will need to be raised dramatically, and Colombia's upper classes will need to pay more to finance both the law enforcement and rural development efforts. Colombia's wealthy elites need to put more of their money into genuine development projects, rather than into Miami real estate. The U.S., through active engagement, should encourage the Colombian government to reform its tax system and encourage the return of badly needed capital to the country. The U.S. should also provide technical advice and assistance in both of these areas.

Colombia's upper classes will need to furnish more than their treasure to this effort, however. Colombia's conscription laws should be changed to ensure that the burden of defending the country against crime and subversion does not fall almost exclusively on the lower strata of society. The upper classes must bear their share of the load in the armed forces, police, and civil service.³¹ If Colombia and its government do not take these important measures and make the sacrifices necessary to defeat the insurgencies, then the United States should seriously reconsider its involvement in the country. One lesson of the Vietnam tragedy is that the U.S. cannot single-handedly win an internal conflict in another country if that country's own people lack the will to fight.

The final, and perhaps most difficult goal of U.S. engagement will be to convince the Colombian government to take decisive action against the AUC. The AUC's ties to the army as well as senior government officials (possibly including President Uribe during his tenure as Governor of Antioquia province),³² have made this very difficult in the past. Strong action against the AUC is critical, however, to ensure the credibility of the government's efforts. Effective rural development and restoration of government authority in the hinterlands cannot be accomplished without destroying or co-opting the armed units of the AUC. U.S. assistance to Colombia must therefore be conditioned on a vigorous campaign against the AUC.

U.S. foreign aid, both civilian and military, is a key element of the LED strategy. The current \$1.3 billion included in Plan Colombia is a good start, but is far short of President Pastrana's \$7.5 billion estimated need. Where will the additional funds come from? As noted above, Colombia will need to generate some of the money itself by improving tax collection and encouraging the repatriation of capital. The United States will have to provide more aid as well, particularly in the development sphere. The proposed Andean Regional Initiative includes an

additional \$430 million for Colombia,³³ but this will not be enough. Colombia and the United States will need to solicit the remainder of the funds from other sources, principally in Western Europe and Japan. Doing so will require skillful and effective diplomacy.

The U.S. erred in crafting the current Plan Colombia on a virtually bilateral basis. The Europeans, feeling excluded, provided little assistance.³⁴ Drugs are a worldwide scourge, however, and Europe also suffers from this threat. The U.S. and Colombia must therefore work to convince the Europeans and other potential donors that they have a stake in the success of Colombia's counterinsurgency campaign, and invite them to provide input and suggestions as well as funds. Colombia's Washington Embassy is widely acknowledged to have run a masterful campaign to lobby Congress for increased aid;³⁵ this campaign should be duplicated in London, Paris, Berlin, Tokyo, and other important capitals. U.S. Embassies in these cities can support their Colombian colleagues in this effort, as can policymakers in Washington. The Europeans can be especially helpful in designing and funding development projects, given their historic reluctance to provide military aid and their enhanced focus on human rights issues. The latter concern also means that European aid is unlikely to materialize unless Colombia acts decisively against the AUC as well as leftist groups.

U.S. diplomatic efforts are also needed in Colombia's immediate environs. The U.S. should work constructively with Venezuelan President Chavez to encourage him to terminate any support, rhetorical or otherwise, that he may be providing to the FARC. This will require both sides to reduce mutual tensions and suspicions growing out of the ambivalent American attitude during the recent coup attempt in Venezuela.³⁶ The U.S. may not particularly like Chavez, but we do need to work with him. In a similar vein, the U.S. should work with the governments of Panama, Peru, and Ecuador to encourage them to prevent their border territories

from being used as sanctuaries, supply bases, or drug transit points by any Colombian insurgent group. If necessary, the U.S. should provide assistance to help secure these areas.

In addition to development aid, U.S. military and law enforcement assistance to Colombia should continue, especially to increase the capabilities and professionalism of army and police units. U.S. advisers will be required for this effort, but should be limited to the current ceiling of 800 personnel.³⁷ The limit ensures that military aid will remain balanced with development assistance, and will be focused on the most important tasks: special forces training; intelligence gathering, airlift, and equipment modernization. It will prevent Vietnam-style "mission creep" and give the Colombian forces the tools they need to battle FARC, ELN, and AUC units that cannot be neutralized in any other way. Fully trained and upgraded Colombian military special operations units can more effectively defend the state against attacks by insurgent groups, as well as conduct offensive operations to destroy insurgent units, bases, and drug production facilities. Given that all of the insurgent groups are now engaged in drug trafficking, any limitation of U.S. assistance to purely counternarcotics units or operations is unrealistic and counterproductive. Enhanced military power is a necessary condition for a successful counterinsurgency campaign, but as noted earlier, it is not a sufficient condition.

Continued improvement of Colombian National Police (CNP) capabilities is also critical, as the CNP will be the long-term presence in most rural areas after military engagements have ceased. The CNP also conducts the lion's share of Colombia's counternarcotics efforts, especially the aerial spraying operations which have been successful in reducing coca and opium poppy acreage.³⁸ The CNP's fair treatment of the rural population will be a vital part of the effort to extend the government's civil authority in areas formerly controlled by the insurgents. If the CNP can dispense justice in these regions in a firm but impartial manner, the government's writ

will be enhanced. If the police are seen as corrupt or biased (for example, in favor of the AUC) the sympathy and support of rural residents will be much harder to achieve, and any battlefield successes against the insurgents could therefore be squandered. For these reasons, the extensive U.S. support to the CNP in the form of training, equipment, and aircraft should be maintained.

The final element of a successful LED strategy is a comprehensive public relations and public diplomacy campaign. As described earlier, the U.S. will need to convince the Colombian government and people to make the difficult social and economic changes necessary to defeat the insurgent groups. Since the struggle will be a long-term one, the public relations campaign must be of similar duration. The campaign should not be confined to Colombia; both Americans and other international aid donors need to be kept informed of progress in the anti-insurgent effort. Developmental achievements need to be given equal billing with military and law enforcement successes. By highlighting the positive aspects of the government's campaign (rural development and security), as well as the negative consequences (jail or death) for those who refuse to cooperate, this public diplomacy effort can maintain popular support over the long-term in Colombia and abroad. In doing so it will encourage politicians and policymakers to devote both the money and the time needed for the LED strategy to work. Counterinsurgency warfare is also a bloody, dirty business and the Clausewitzian "fog of war" will hang heavily over the countryside. Even with vastly improved intelligence, it is inevitable that mistakes will be made and innocents will suffer during the course of the struggle. The reservoir of popular support generated by a comprehensive strategy and outlined in an effective public relations campaign will help the government deal with these unavoidable rough spots.

Conclusion:

Colombia's political situation can be stabilized, its armed insurgents neutralized, and its drug production reduced provided the appropriate strategy is followed. To use a medical analogy, Colombia is afflicted with a series of chronic maladies that cannot be cured with a quick injection of military force, nor will they get better if left alone or peacefully accommodated. Only the law enforcement/development (LED) strategy offers the kind of comprehensive treatment necessary to solve these problems. This strategy offers no quick fixes, but rather a comprehensive and long-term prescription for national health. "Strong medicine" in the form of military and law enforcement conflict with the insurgent groups must be supplemented by major changes in the national "lifestyle." Colombia's sclerotic judicial and public administration systems must be unclogged and improved, the financial sector tightened, public corruption reduced, and rural development greatly enhanced. This is the only way to eliminate the current insurgencies and prevent any recurrence.

The United States, for its part, must keep in mind two other important points. First, Colombia is not the sickest or most dangerous patient in the international ward of problem countries. Its difficulties are serious but do not threaten the survival of the United States or other key allies. We can therefore allow time for the LED strategy to succeed, and need not apply risky, experimental therapies. Second, the prescribed regimen is very expensive, and will require the support of other countries. The U.S. does not have the resources to proceed unilaterally in this case, given our many other international commitments. If we expect others to contribute funds, we must also be prepared to listen to their views and opinions.

In the end, it will be the Colombians themselves who determine whether the country ultimately survives as a prosperous democratic state. By offering a comprehensive Law

Enforcement/Development strategy to overcome the insurgencies, the United States can help Colombia choose the right course.

¹ Julia E. Sweig, "What Kind of War For Colombia?" Foreign Affairs, September/October 2002, 123.

² Gen. Barry R. McCaffrey, ret. "Challenges to U.S. National Security - Colombia: Drugs, Terrorism, and Crime," Armed Forces Journal International, October 2002, 6; and U.S. Department of State, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2001 - Colombia, <<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2001/wha/8326.htm>> (20 October 2002).

³ Kurt Weyland, "Will Chavez Lose His Luster?" Foreign Affairs, November/December 2001, 82-83.

⁴ Sweig, 137-139; and U.S. Department of State, Background Notes - Colombia - Economy, April 2002, <<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/1831.htm>> (20 October 2002).

⁵ McCaffrey, 6-7.

⁶ The White House, The National Security Strategy of the United States of America, (Washington, DC: September, 2002), 10.

⁷ Alma Guillermoprieto, "Waiting For War," The New Yorker, May 13, 2002, 48-49.

⁸ Sweig, 124-126; Guillermoprieto, 50-52.

⁹ Scott Wilson, "U.S. Steps Into the Rebels' Lair" Washington Post, October 12, 2002, A20.

¹⁰ Sweig, 123-124; and Center for International Policy, "Information about the Combatants" Colombia Project, August 2002, <<http://www.ciponline.org/colombia/infocombat.htm>> (24 October 2002).

¹¹ Scott Wilson, "Cocaine Trade Causes Rifts in Colombian War," Washington Post, September 16, 2002, A1.

¹² Guillermoprieto, 54.

¹³ Sweig, 124.

¹⁴ U.S. Department of State, Background Notes - Colombia; and Mark Bowden, Killing Pablo (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2001), 64 -66.

¹⁵ Guillermoprieto, 49-50.

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- ¹⁶ Guillermprieto, 52-53; and U.S. Department of State, Background Notes - Colombia.
- ¹⁷ Sweig, 128-132.
- ¹⁸ Guillermprieto, 52-53.
- ¹⁹ U.S. Department of State, Plan Colombia Fact Sheet, March 2001, <<http://www.state.gov/p/wha/rls/fs/2001/1042pf.htm>> (24 October, 2002); U.S. Department of State, International Narcotics Control Strategy Report 2001 - Colombia, March 2002, <<http://www.state.gov/g/inl/rls/nrcrpt/2001/rpt/8477.htm>> (24 October 2002); and Sweig, 128-129
- ²⁰ Sweig, 130.
- ²¹ "U.S. to Train Colombia's New Commando Unit," Washington Post, October 4, 2002, A20
- ²² Sweig, 133-134.
- ²³ U.S. Department of State, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices.
- ²⁴ McCaffrey, 6; Sweig, 131.
- ²⁵ Sweig, 125; Guillermprieto, 53-54.
- ²⁶ Scott Wilson, "Urban Anti-Rebel Raid a New Turn in Colombian War," Washington Post, October 24, 2002, A28.
- ²⁷ Tony Augarde, ed. , The Oxford Dictionary of Modern Quotations, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 146.
- ²⁸ Sweig, 133.
- ²⁹ Sweig, 135.
- ³⁰ McCaffrey, 8-10, and U.S. Department of State, International Narcotics Control Strategy Report 2001 - Colombia.
- ³¹ Sweig, 140-141.
- ³² Guillermprieto, 53; Wilson, "Urban Anti-Rebel Raid... ", A28.
- ³³ Center for International Policy, "U.S. Military and Police Aid 2002 Supplement", Colombia Project, July 2002, <<http://www.ciponline.org/colombia/02supp.htm>> (24 October 2002), and Sweig, 134-135.
- ³⁴ Sweig, 136.
- ³⁵ Sweig, 130.

³⁶ Weyland, 82-84.

³⁷ McCaffrey, 8.

³⁸ McCaffrey, 10.

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